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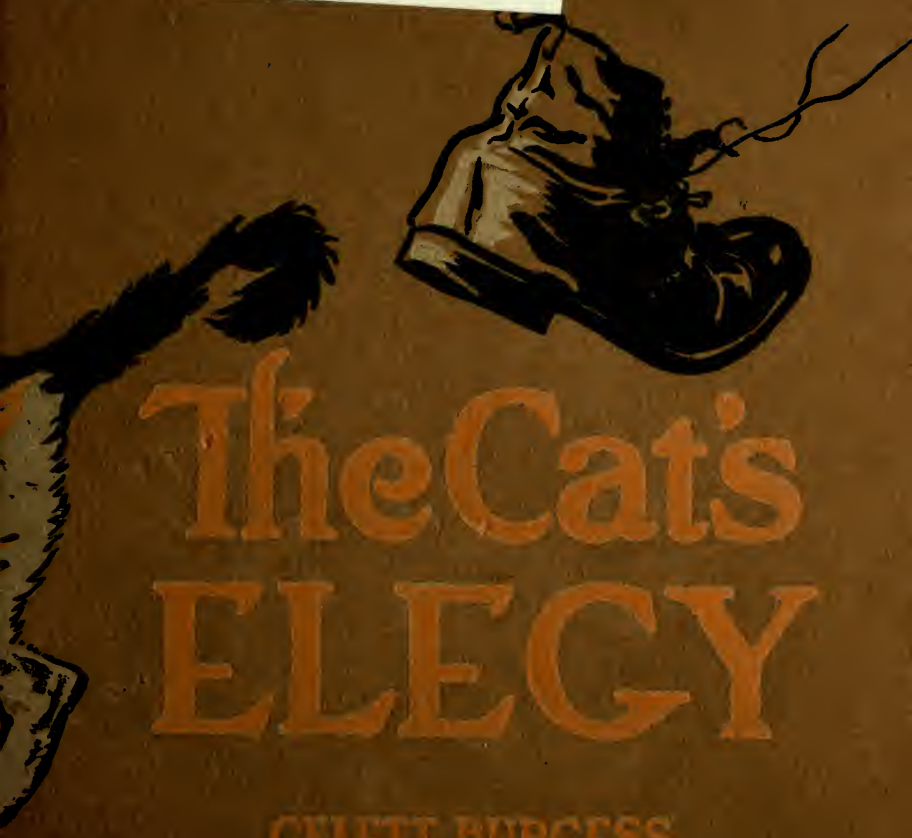

The Cat's ELEGY

CELETT BURGESS
BURGESS JOHNSON

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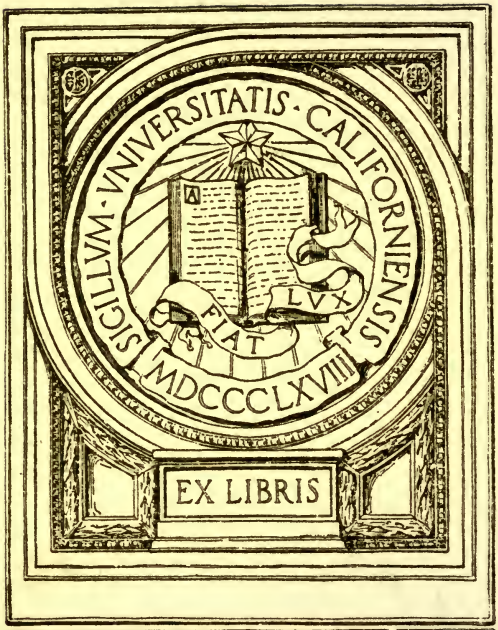
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The Cat's Elegy

THE CAT'S ELEGY

By

GELETT BURGESS

and

BURGES JOHNSON

CHICAGO
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1913

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Published March, 1913

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The Cat's Elegy

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The Cat's Elegy

I

THE tea-bell tolls for Nell
to pass the tray,
The glowing cook winds
slowly up the clock,
The ashman homeward wends his
weary way
And leaves a trail of cinders round
the block.

The Cat's Elegy

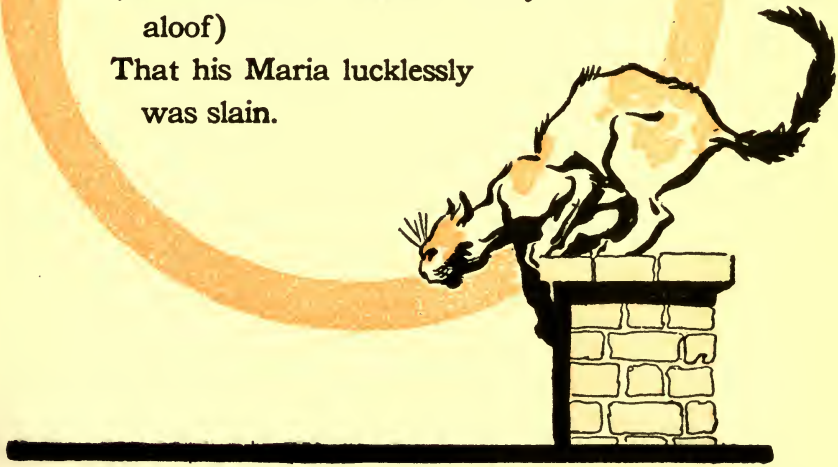
II

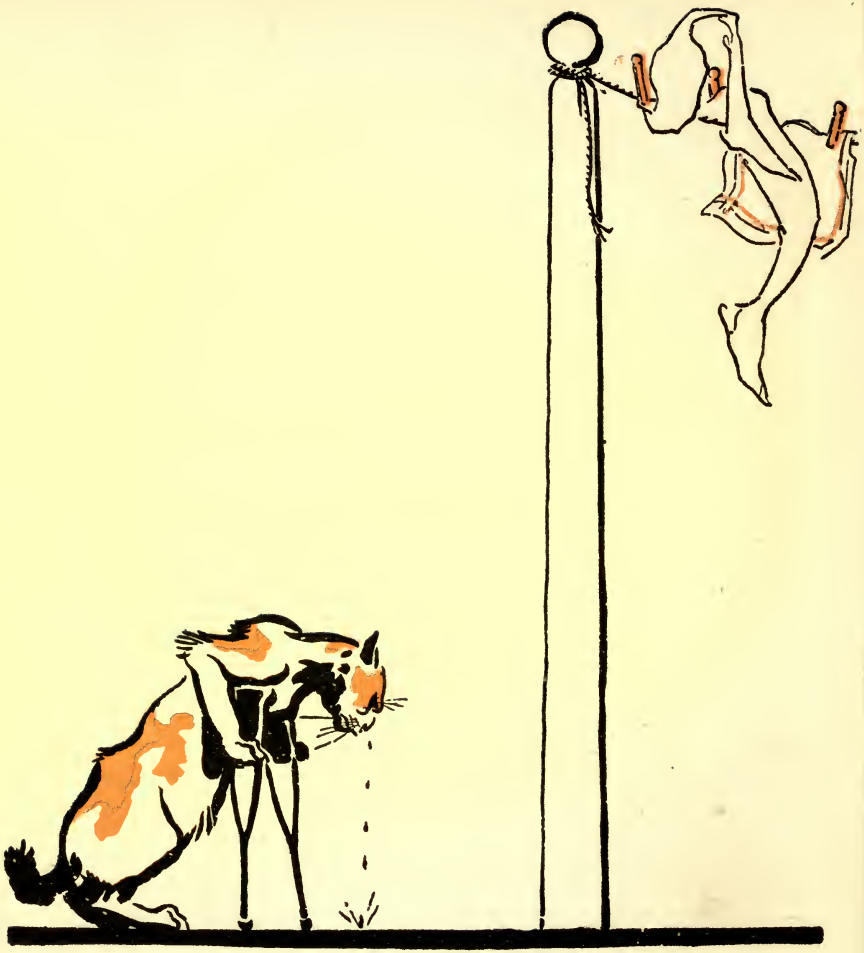
NOW fade the dingy fences on our sight,
And all the air is still, except, maybe,
Where some street-organ, faintly through the night,
Wafts "Holy City" and "The Bamboo Tree."

The Cat's Elegy

III

SAVE that from yonder
sparsely slated roof
A moping Tom doth moan-
ingly complain
(While other felines darkly hold
aloof)
That his Maria lucklessly
was slain.

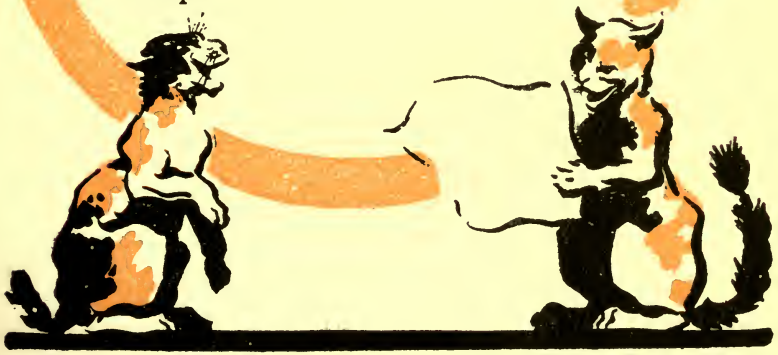




The Cat's Elegy

IV

BENEATH the shade yon
dying pear tree sheds,
Where rest tomato cans on
ashy heaps,
Where cast-off garments line the
pansy beds,
The flattened form of poor Maria
sleeps.



The Cat's Elegy

V

THE wheezy call of milkmen
in the morn,
The cook's insistent, matutinal grouch,
The scissors grinder's harsh and raucous horn
No more shall rouse her from her weedy couch.

The Cat's Elegy

VI

FOR her no more shall wave
the threatening broom,
Or busy housewife scat her
from the chair,
No children run to chase her from
the room,
Or pampered dogs besiege her in
her lair.

The Cat's Elegy

VII

OFT sought she out appointed rendezvous,
In dalliance spent the fairest of her days,
Or nightly studied, with her art in view,
The acoustic properties of alley-ways.

The Cat's Elegy

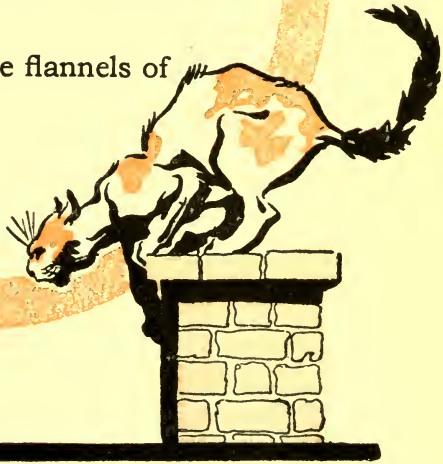
VIII

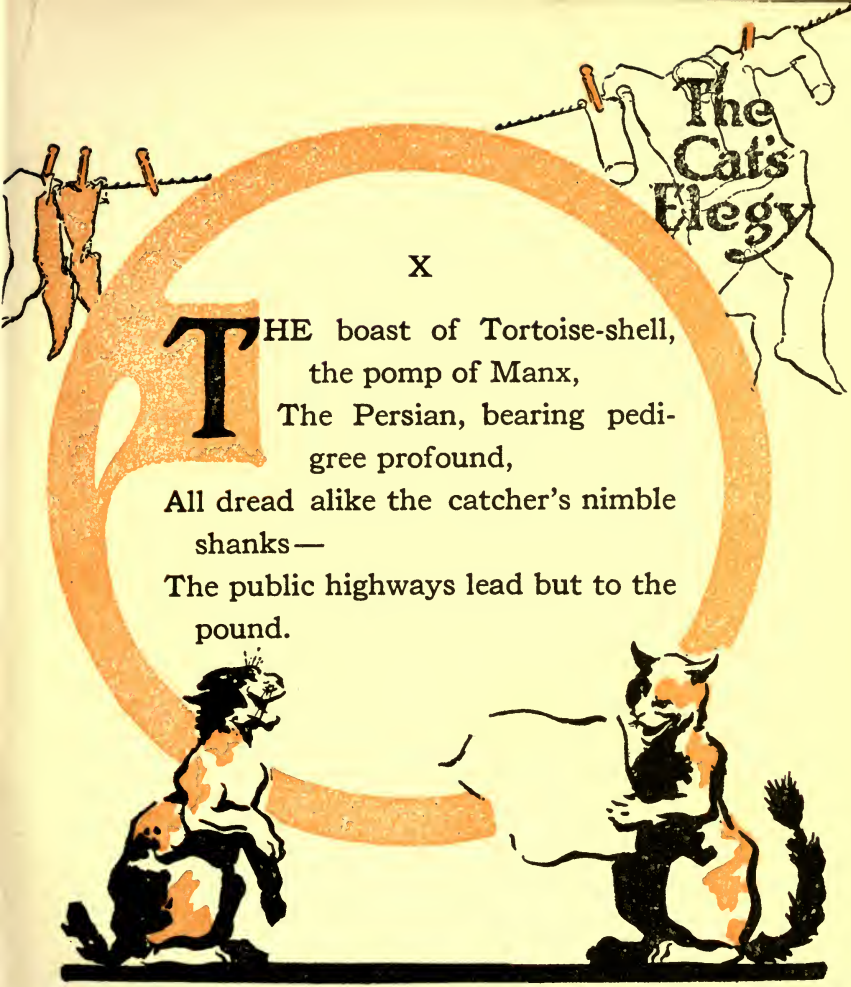
OFT did the predatory cur
rejoice
To drive her, quivering, up
this lonely tree;
How jocund did she raise nocturnal
voice!
How cursed the lodgers, kept awake
at three!

The Cat's Elegy

IX

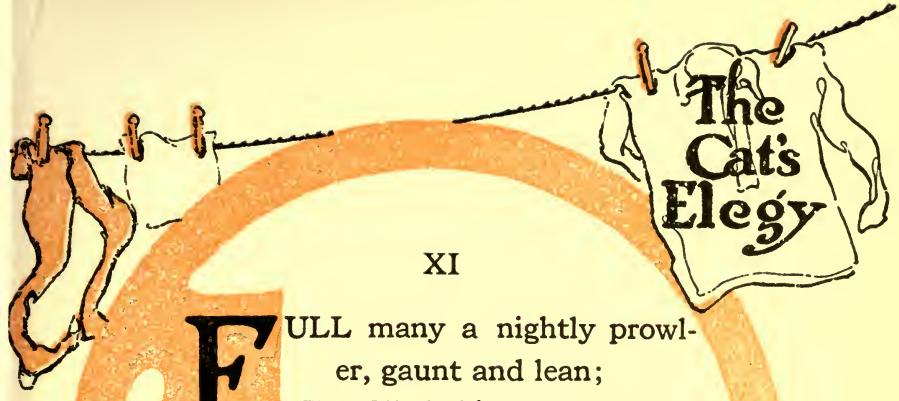
LET not some grooméd lap cat e'er decry
The humble realm of that backyard obscure—
The battered gate, the clothesline whence there fly
The short and simple flannels of the poor.





X

THE boast of Tortoise-shell,
the pomp of Manx,
The Persian, bearing pedigree profound,
All dread alike the catcher's nimble shanks—
The public highways lead but to the pound.



XI

FULL many a nightly prowler, gaunt and lean;
Has filled this alley with his music rare;
Full many a cat is born to howl unseen,
And waste his sweetness on the city air.

The Cat's Elegy

XII

NOR you, ye proud, impute to
him the sin,
Who in his nightshirt did
his window raise,
And, hurling down his missile at the
din,
Ended the joyance of her
heartfelt lays!

XIII

RETURNING from some animated bust,
Back to his mansion, pale and sick at heart,
Maria's voice provoked his latent lust
For blood; she fell a victim to her art.

The Cat's Elegy

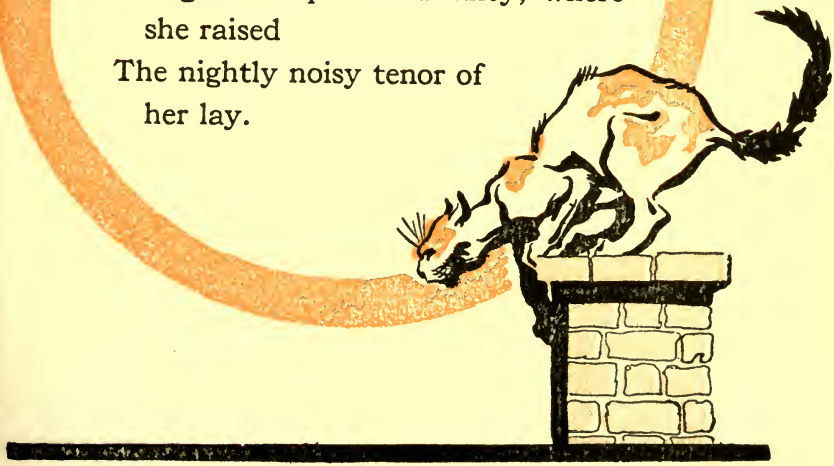
XIV

PERHAPS in this neglected form has been
A soul that in Bubastis might have reigned;
The Goddess Pasht have recognized as kin;
Or ruled Kilkenny ere its glory waned.

The Cat's Elegy

XV

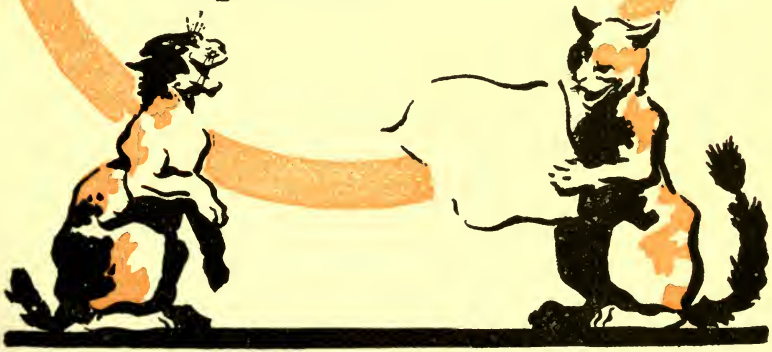
FAR from the madding
crowd she was not feased,
The while her vagrom fancies made her stray
Along the sequestered alley, where she raised
The nightly noisy tenor of her lay.



The Cat's Elegy

XVI

FOR who, to grim insomnia a prey,
That weird elusive being e'er could mark?
Who has not raised his window in dismay
And blindly cast some weapon through the dark?



The Cat's Elegy

XVII

YET on some pavement, soon or late, there lies
The cat who tortures slumber while she prowls;
While from the tomb the voice of Nature cries,
As some small urchin imitates her howls.

The Cat's Elegy

XVIII

BUT Requies Cat, now that she is dead
(Nine times she died, and therefore quite deceased)
Approach and read (with friends to hold thy head)
This touching tribute to the little beast.

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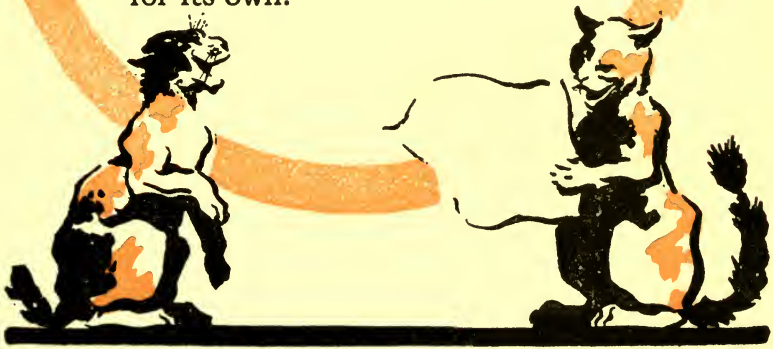
The Cat's Elegy

EPITAPH

HERE lies poor Puss, with collar unbedight,
A homeless cat, a thing of skin and bone,
Full-throated rose her swan song on the night,
And now the dust-heap claims her for its own.



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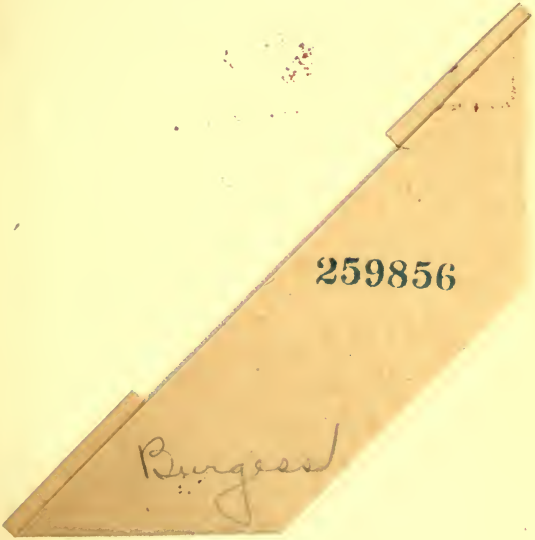
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